



EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

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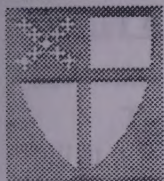
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news digest

96-1561D

Anglican Church in Wales will ordain women to the priesthood

(ENS) The Anglican Church in Wales will join sister churches in the British Isles when it ordains women to the priesthood early next year.

The September 19 decision by the church's Governing Body comes after previous attempts failed because clergy votes did not meet the necessary two-thirds majority. This time, by a single vote, the clergy joined bishops and laity who had already expressed their approval of the change.

Archbishop Alwyn Rice-Jones, primate of the church, strongly urged support for the measure lest Wales become "a forgotten province of the Anglican Church." The Church of England, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Ireland already ordain women to the priesthood. Of the 37 provinces in the Anglican Communion, nearly half now ordain women.

The Rev. Cynthia Black, president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, said that she joined her sisters around the world in celebrating the decision. "As each member of the Anglican Communion moves toward a more whole priesthood, I dare to believe that we are creating the realm of God on earth. And with each step, I'm more hopeful that some day our sisters in the Roman Catholic Church will be able to be ordained."

Pamela P. Chinnis, who as president of the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies may be the highest-ranking woman in the leadership of the Anglican Communion, said that she hoped the decision by the Church in Wales "might encourage other member churches to take a closer look at ministry by women." She expressed her hope that "they may discover, as we have in the Episcopal Church, the vital role women can play."

96-1562D

Proposed changes in disciplinary canons for bishops draws mixed response

(ENS) A proposed revision of the disciplinary canons governing bishops has drawn a vote of no confidence from the presiding bishop's chancellor, or legal advisor.

In a three-page fax sent to the Standing Commission on the Constitution and Canons (SCCC) meeting in Portland, Oregon, August 22, David Beers, chancellor to Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, took issue with proposals that bring the disciplinary canons on bishops more into line with those governing priests and deacons.

Responding to a 61-page draft of changes to Title IV canons sent to all bishops and diocesan chancellors last July, Beers wrote that he found that the commission's changes to be unnecessary and in some situations a hindrance to the presiding bishop's ministry.

A new provision giving the presiding bishop authority to temporarily inhibit bishops charged with an offense was the chief target of Beer's criticism. But he also argued against other proposals changing the requirements for bringing a presentment against a bishop.

Beers' communique, arriving on the first day of a three-day meeting, caught commission members by surprise and prompted an hour-long executive session. In a discussion following the session, commission members debated how they should respond. Agreeing with Beers that a proposed requirement that two-thirds of the House of Bishops vote for presentments to proceed was impractical, the commission reduced the threshold to one-third. But on Beers' other points, the commission held to its original proposals.

96-1563D

Browning heartened by strong showing of bill to curb job discrimination against homosexuals

(ENS) Despite the narrow defeat of a federal bill that would have helped protect homosexuals from job discrimination, Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning expressed satisfaction that the bill drew as much support as it did.

"It only lost by one vote," observed Browning, referring to the 50-49 Senate vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act held September 10. "That's a tremendous showing for the first time Congress has ever voted on a major bill on civil rights for homosexuals."

The bill, which would have barred employers from using sexual orientation as the basis for hiring, firing, promotion or compensation, was offered as an amendment to the Defense of Marriage Act barring same-sex marriages. That act was approved overwhelmingly.

Buoyed by the close vote on the employment non-discrimination proposal, supporters

have vowed to bring it back for future consideration.

The week before the vote, Browning joined the senators sponsoring the employment bill at a Washington D.C. press conference. Calling gay and lesbian people "children of God" who deserve equal protection under the law, he stressed the Episcopal Church's long support for equal rights for homosexuals.

For 20 years, "the Episcopal Church has stated explicitly that all citizens, including people who are gay and lesbian, should have equal protection under the law," Browning said. While "it seems obvious that all should have this right," he said, the "200-year-old concept of equal protection has fought an uphill battle to become reality for many Americans."

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Browning dismisses complaint against Pennsylvania bishop who ordained a non-celibate homosexual

(ENS) Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning has announced that he will not proceed with an investigation into a complaint brought against Bishop Allen Bartlett, Jr., of the Diocese of Pennsylvania for ordaining a non-celibate homosexual as a deacon.

Calling themselves "Concerned Episcopalians," two priests--one from Pennsylvania and one from another diocese--along with more than 100 lay people signed a complaint in June, 1995, charging that Bartlett violated the discipline of the Episcopal Church when he ordained the Rev. David Morris as a deacon in 1994.

Browning postponed action on the complaint pending the resolution of an ecclesiastical court trial of Bishop Walter Righter, retired bishop of Iowa, for ordaining a non-celibate homosexual as a deacon in 1990. The charges against Righter, brought by 10 other bishops, were dismissed by the court in May.

In a letter in late August to Bartlett and the Concerned Episcopalians group, Browning said that he would not be taking the next step in the investigation of convening a panel of bishops to review the allegations.

Based on the Righter court ruling and an earlier decision by a five-member panel of bishops that dismissed similar charges against Bishop Stewart Wood of the Diocese of Michigan, Browning said, "I conclude that the paper submitted to me by the complainants regarding the ordination by Bishop Bartlett does not on its face charge any 'offense,'" under church canons.

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Review panel appointed in dispute over priest's election as rector of Southern Virginia parish

(ENS) Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning has convened a panel of five bishops to review a complaint brought against Bishop Frank H. Vest, Jr., of the Diocese of Southern Virginia for refusing to approve the election of a priest as rector of a parish in his diocese.

Members of Christ Church in Danville, Virginia, and two priests of the Diocese of Southern Virginia lodged the complaint claiming that Vest has violated the laws of the Episcopal Church by refusing to accept the church's call to the Rev. Peter Toon.

Toon, formerly of the Diocese of Quincy, was received into the Episcopal Church from the Church of England in 1991. He has been an advocate of "traditionalist" positions opposed to such changes in the Episcopal Church as the ordination of women.

If the panel determines that the charge, if proven true, would constitute a violation of Episcopal Church disciplinary canons, a second panel called a board of inquiry will be appointed. The board of inquiry, made up of clergy and laity, will determine whether there are sufficient facts to support the charge.

Only after those two panels have reviewed the charge would it be considered by the Court for the Trial of a Bishop, a body of nine bishops that would hear the case.

96-1561

Anglican Church in Wales will ordain women to the priesthood

by James Solheim

(ENS) The Anglican Church in Wales will join sister churches in the British Isles when it ordains women to the priesthood early next year.

The September 19 decision by the church's Governing Body comes after previous attempts failed because clergy votes did not meet the necessary two-thirds majority. This time, by a single vote, the clergy joined bishops and laity who had already expressed their approval of the change.

Archbishop Alwyn Rice-Jones, primate of the church, strongly urged support for the measure lest Wales become "a forgotten province of the Anglican Church." The Church of England, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Ireland already ordain women to the priesthood. Of the 37 provinces in the Anglican Communion, nearly half now ordain women.

According to observers, the issue was forcefully argued before the vote. David McIntyre, secretary general of the province, told Ecumenical News International that it had been "a good-tempered meeting, although both sides expressed themselves powerfully."

Women in the diocese expressed their joy. "I am just so relieved and thankful. Now we can get on and move the church forward together," said Valerie Jones, who is in charge of three parishes in the northern part of Wales.

"We are thrilled for the women deacons who have been waiting to have their vocation tested--and particularly thrilled for the whole church in Wales," said Christina Reese of the Movement for the Ordination of Women. The church has 73 women deacons waiting for ordination.

The Rev. Cynthia Black, president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, said that she joined her sisters around the world in celebrating the decision. "As each member of the Anglican Communion moves toward a more whole priesthood, I dare to believe that we are creating the realm of God on earth. And with each step, I'm more hopeful that some day our sisters in the Roman Catholic Church will be able to be ordained."

Pamela P. Chinnis, who as president of the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies may be the highest-ranking woman in the leadership of the Anglican Communion, said that she hoped the decision by the Church in Wales "might encourage other member churches to take a closer look at ministry by women." She expressed her hope that "they may discover, as we have in the Episcopal Church, the vital role women can play."

--Cedric Pulford of ENI contributed to this story.

96-1562

Proposed changes in disciplinary canons for bishops draws mixed response

by David Skidmore

(ENS) A proposed revision of the disciplinary canons governing bishops has drawn a vote of no confidence from the presiding bishop's chancellor, or legal advisor.

In a three-page fax sent to the Standing Commission on the Constitution and Canons (SCCC) meeting in Portland, Oregon, August 22, David Beers, chancellor to Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, took issue with proposals that bring the disciplinary canons on bishops more into line with those governing priests and deacons.

Responding to a 61-page draft of changes to Title IV canons sent to all bishops and diocesan chancellors last July, Beers wrote that found that the commission's changes to be unnecessary and in some situations a hindrance to the presiding bishop's ministry.

A new provision giving the presiding bishop authority to temporarily inhibit bishops charged with an offense was the chief target of Beer's criticism.

"In 1994," wrote Beers, "the presiding bishop was asked by the commission whether the canons should be changed to give him inhibitory authority over bishops, and he, after consultation with his advisors, replied that would not aid, but would indeed likely hinder, his ability to deal with disciplinary matters. Nothing has happened in the intervening time to change that view."

Pastoral approach

The formation earlier this year of a three-member bishops panel to advise the presiding bishop on pastoral and disciplinary issues, and the canonical change at the last General Convention limiting a bishop's ability to cross diocesan lines to conduct episcopal ministry, provide sufficient means for dealing with bishops' misconduct or jurisdictional disputes, argued Beers.

Recent cases, he noted, have shown the value of a pastoral approach "in which the presiding bishop takes the lead in working out disciplinary problems with the bishop and leaders of the diocese."

Also drawing objections from Beers were the SCCC's proposals for easing the requirements for filing complaints against bishops, and extending the conditions for filing presentments. Under existing Title IV disciplinary canons, at least three bishops or 10 adult communicants--two of whom must be priests--must be signatories to a complaint against a bishop. The SCCC is proposing to reduce that requirement to one bishop and three adult communicants, only one of whom must be a priest.

Noting the "considerable disruption" created when a charge is filed against a bishop, Beers said any change should be approached with caution. If complainants run into problems,

then they can turn to the new advisory panel. "I know of no basis for thinking that the procedure for filing charges should be changed to facilitate this process for complainants," he said. "I know of no one whose complaint has been hindered by the current requirements."

Cumbersome additional step

Beers also had reservations about the addition of a prerequisite to filing presentments against bishops accused of doctrinal violations. Presently 10 bishops with jurisdiction in the church can file a presentment against another bishop. The commission is proposing that a request for a statement of disassociation precede the presentment action against a bishop charged with violating church doctrine.

As proposed by the commission, the canons would require that 10 bishops file a request for a statement of disassociation along with a proposed text for the statement with the presiding bishop and that within 15 months of the request the House of Bishops decide whether to issue the statement. A majority of all bishops eligible to vote would be necessary for the disassociation statement to take effect. Only then can a presentment on doctrinal grounds proceed. Within six months of the statement, the presenting bishops must file a written presentment accompanied by an explanation on why the disassociation statement was insufficient.

This additional step, said Beers, "seems unduly cumbersome and time consuming," and "inappropriately disruptive" by extending the period in which a bishop lives under a cloud of suspicion. He also questioned the two-thirds voting margin the commission was proposing for the House of Bishops to consent to a presentment.

Requiring such a high threshold of approval "seems unfairly stringent and impossible to achieve," he said. In the presentment against Bishop Walter Righter this past year, the House of Bishops barely met the much lower standard of 25 percent stipulated in the present canons.

Other changes to bishop's disciplinary canons proposed by the commission include creating separate trial courts for doctrinal and non-doctrinal offenses; including lay people and priests on non-doctrinal trial courts, allowing victims and the spouses or adult children of victims to file charges; and replacing the present Board of Inquiry for investigating charges with a permanent Review Committee that includes lay people and priests. As for canons dealing with priests and deacons, the most substantive change is a provision permitting individuals or dioceses to reimburse the legal costs incurred by accused clergy.

Caught by surprise

Beers' communique, arriving on the first day of a three-day meeting, caught commission members by surprise and prompted an hour-long executive session. In a discussion following the session, commission members debated how they should respond to Beers.

Agreeing with Beers and 25 others who responded to the proposals for changes, that the two-thirds vote for presentments was impractical, the commission reduced the threshold

to one-third. But on Beers' other points, the commission held to its original proposals.

The most adamant argument against altering the revisions came from Sally Johnson, chancellor of the Diocese of Minnesota and the principal author of the Title IV revisions approved at the 1994 General Convention and the draft of the latest revisions. Stating she was unwilling to sideline the changes solely because of opposition by the presiding bishop and his chancellor, Johnson pointed out that both the bishops and deputies of General Convention and the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations had requested the SCCC to propose additional changes to Title IV.

In an interview after the meeting, Johnson said that the changes have been prompted by input from a number of sources, including Bishop Harold Hopkins, director of the Office of Pastoral Development, and the Committee on Sexual Exploitation which met with the SCCC at the October 1995 interim bodies meeting in Minneapolis.

More openness

"One thing particularly that clergy are telling us is that the structure for bishops should be as much as possible like the structure for priests and deacons," said Johnson. "Another concern being raised is how much of this should be out in the open and how much should be behind closed doors. I think many are asking for more openness."

Beers' argument that the three-bishop panel can adequately address many complaints against bishops doesn't entirely wash with Johnson. A permanent review committee, made up of three bishops, three priests and three lay people, as proposed by the SCCC, would have greater impartiality, she said. "Once a complaint has been made it is easy for people on the outside of that process to question whether it is a fair process if that panel is picked after the complaint was made."

Opportunities for the presiding bishop to intervene pastorally would not be affected by the SCCC's proposed changes to Title IV, said Johnson. The commission's concern is in the canonical arena, she said. If all parties are satisfied by a pastoral approach to a complaint, "that's great," said Johnson. "Someday there may be a situation where that might not be the case. I think everyone is in agreement that there be a fair and equitable process for disciplining bishops."

Checks and balances

Samuel Allen, chair of the SCCC, agrees. "It doesn't mean the presiding bishop cannot--and probably very effectively--handle disciplinary matters and do it very quietly," he said. "What we're concerned with is what happens if that effort fails." Allen also has reservations about the authority of the bishops' panel in disciplinary matters. "I feel what is going on is extracanoncal and I think we can do better than that," he said.

Not everyone on the commission is convinced the changes are in the best interest of the church. The most outspoken critic, Bishop John Buchanan of the Diocese of West Missouri, sympathizes with the presiding bishop's concern that the authority to inhibit other bishops

inappropriately interferes in the relationship between a bishop and his or her diocese. The present options available to the presiding bishop, he said, has been more than adequate. "I don't know of a case where we haven't been served well. There have been instances where the presiding bishop and a diocese have had to work out some very complicated matters."

Buchanan also takes issue with the commission's recommendation to include lay communicants and priests on a trial court for non-doctrinal offenses. "I have reservations about that," he said. "It goes back to trying to lay upon the national church structure the structure of a diocese without having a standing committee. There is no check and balance in this."

Like Beers, Buchanan also is reluctant to support changing the court's composition since it would require a change in the church's constitution, which presently stipulates that only bishops may serve on Court for the Trial of a Bishop. Unlike canonical changes which can be passed on a first reading, a constitutional change would require two votes at succeeding General Conventions.

"Philosophically, I don't know if we in the Episcopal Church want to make radical change like that in our policy," said Buchanan.

Opening things up

Bishop Robert Tharp of East Tennessee and a member of the commission said that having both laity and clergy on a court "might open things up a bit."

While the provision for a statement of disassociation could help clarify the issues behind a doctrinal dispute, Buchanan is concerned about the additional step becoming a roadblock to presentments. "I don't see anything wrong with the present system," he said. "People with a grievance against a bishop can charge him."

Allen admits that the issue of the chancellor's concerns has to be settled before the commission meets in November to prepare the final report to General Convention. "I think it's quite clear that the presiding bishop's office feels that the commission is going off on a lark of its own, and we need to get that squared away because we don't want to be," said Allen. "It's very troublesome."

--David Skidmore is communications officer for the Diocese of Chicago.

96-1563

Browning heartened by strong showing of bill to curb job discrimination against homosexuals

by James H. Thrall

(ENS) Despite the narrow defeat of a federal bill that would have helped protect homosexuals from job discrimination, Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning expressed satisfaction that the bill drew as much support as it did.

"It only lost by one vote," observed Browning, referring to the 50-49 Senate vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act held September 10. "That's a tremendous showing for the first time Congress has ever voted on a major bill on civil rights for homosexuals."

The bill, which would have barred employers from using sexual orientation as the basis for hiring, firing, promotion or compensation, was offered as an amendment to the Defense of Marriage Act barring same-sex marriages. That act was approved overwhelmingly.

Buoyed by the close vote on the employment non-discrimination proposal, supporters have vowed to bring it back for future consideration.

The week before the vote, Browning joined the senators sponsoring the employment bill at a Washington D.C. press conference. Calling gay and lesbian people "children of God" who deserve equal protection under the law, he stressed the Episcopal Church's long support for equal rights for homosexuals.

For 20 years, "the Episcopal Church has stated explicitly that all citizens, including people who are gay and lesbian, should have equal protection under the law," Browning said. While "it seems obvious that all should have this right," he said, the "200-year-old concept of equal protection has fought an uphill battle to become reality for many Americans."

Opposing the sin of discrimination

Speaking in a wood-paneled Senate hearing room crowded with reporters and television crews, Browning prompted laughter as he noted that in 42 years as a priest and bishop, "I have given a lot of sermons . . . and I believe this Congress needs a good, long one." He added that "I have no more important sermon than the one I preach on the sin of discrimination and the hatred and suffering that discrimination feeds on."

Like other speakers, Browning underscored that the bill would not "grant any special status, any special rights or privileges, or any affirmative action plan for people who are gay or lesbian," but only provide "the same protection from discrimination that most Americans take for granted."

Saying that churches have an obligation to oppose discrimination against homosexuals, Browning said that "people who are gay and lesbian are, too, children of God and have full and equal claim with all others upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern of the

church."

To disrespect "the dignity of any human being through discrimination, whether based on race, gender, religion or sexual orientation, is to disrespect our Creator," Browning said. "We must strive to eliminate discrimination in all its forms, and pursue compassion, concern, and respect for all God's children. The Employment Non-discrimination Act would move us in that direction."

A "multi-vitamin" for civil rights

The press conference was convened by Senators Edward M. Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), James M. Jeffords (R-Vermont), and Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Connecticut), and moderated by Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. It included speakers from the business and civil rights communities, a Denver police woman who had been harassed because she is gay, and a former hospital employee fired because she defended a woman other employees believed to be gay. The Human Rights Campaign, a Washington lobbying group, used the press conference to unveil a 30-second television advertisement supporting the bill.

Kennedy called the debate over employment rights for gays "the direct descendant" of civil rights efforts since 1964, and said that the bill was just the latest step in America's quest to "rid itself of the disease of discrimination and bigotry."

Referring to a placard displaying a quote from former U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater, a Republican, Kennedy agreed with Goldwater that "there is no gay exemption in the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence."

Kennedy dismissed charges that the amendment was a "poison pill" designed to hamper passage of the Defense of Marriage Act, which has been criticized as a possibly unconstitutional attack on homosexuals.

Using a slogan echoed throughout the press conference, Kennedy said that the Employment Non-discrimination Act is not a "poison pill, it is a multi-vitamin" in its protection of the diversity of society and of "hard-working Americans who happen to be gay."

Limits to the bill's impact

"Success at work should be directly related to one's ability to do the job, period," said Jeffords. "People who work hard and perform well should not be kept from leading productive and responsible lives."

He also sought to reduce fears about the bill's reach, noting that it prohibits quotas based on sexual orientation, provides exemptions for small businesses and does not require employers to offer benefits to the same-sex partners of employees. The bill also exempts religious institutions.

Lieberman called the "value of equal opportunity" the "central value that America was created to make real." The bill takes the next step, he said, to protect the historic American

promise that "if you were willing to work hard and had the ability, there was no limit to what you could achieve."

Saying that he would be voting for the Defense of Marriage Act, Lieberman called on others to support the amendment as well as a similar affirmation of basic American values.

Charles "Chad" Gifford, chief executive officer for Bank of Boston, called the bill "not just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do," arguing that a company that "values gays and lesbians for who they really are is the company that will be the most productive, the most attractive to the diverse world we live in, and ultimately the most profitable."

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church. The full text of the presiding bishop's comments is available by calling the Office of News and Information.

96-1564

Browning dismisses complaint against Pennsylvania bishop who ordained non-celibate homosexual

by James H. Thrall

(ENS) Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning has announced that he will not proceed with an investigation into a complaint brought against Bishop Allen Bartlett, Jr., of the Diocese of Pennsylvania for ordaining a non-celibate homosexual as a deacon.

Calling themselves "Concerned Episcopalians," two priests--one from Pennsylvania and one from another diocese--along with more than 100 lay people signed a complaint in June, 1995, charging that Bartlett violated the discipline of the Episcopal Church when he ordained the Rev. David Morris as a deacon in 1994.

Browning postponed action on the complaint pending the resolution of an ecclesiastical court trial of Bishop Walter Righter, retired bishop of Iowa, for ordaining a non-celibate homosexual as a deacon in 1990. The charges against Righter, brought by 10 other bishops, were dismissed by the court in May.

In a letter in late August to Bartlett and the Concerned Episcopalians group, Browning said that he would not be taking the next step in the investigation of convening a panel of bishops to review the allegations.

Ordination not a disciplinary offense

Based on the Righter court ruling and an earlier decision by a five-member panel of

bishops that dismissed similar charges against Bishop Stewart Wood of the Diocese of Michigan, Browning said, "I conclude that the paper submitted to me by the complainants regarding the ordination by Bishop Bartlett does not on its face charge any 'offense,'" under church canons.

"These rulings have . . . definitively established for the church at this time that the ordination by a bishop of a non-celibate homosexual person is not a disciplinary 'offense' for which a charge may be brought" under the canons covering discipline for clergy, Browning said. "It would be an unwarranted use of the church's procedures--and resources--for me to convene a panel of bishops to consider this matter further."

The Righter court in particular made clear, he said, that the issues raised by bishops ordaining non-celibate homosexuals "are appropriate for consideration by the General Convention and not our ecclesiastical courts." General Convention, the chief legislative body of the Episcopal Church which meets every three years, is next scheduled to be held in Philadelphia in July, 1997.

But leaders of the Concerned Episcopalians claimed that the Righter trial has no bearing on their complaints.

In dismissing the charges, Browning is violating canon law, "thus circumventing due process and technically a charge could be brought against the presiding bishop," said Hartley S. Connett, a layperson who signed the complaint.

"The overriding issue in all these charges is a test of the faith of the church," Connett said. "The canons of the church have been designed to help us maintain that faith and we intend to use them for this very purpose."

Bartlett welcomes decision

In a letter to clergy in his diocese dated September 5, Bartlett welcomed the decision saying that it "means that those of us in this diocese and the wider church as well can devote all our time and energies to ministering in the name of Christ to a confused and hurting world, without the distractions of a lengthy investigation and possible trial."

Acknowledging that "some in the diocese and beyond may disagree with the presiding bishop's decision," Bartlett added that "thanks be to God, the Episcopal Church has a better way of addressing serious disagreements about matters of faith than presentments and trials."

Bartlett noted that "some of those most concerned with these matters have already announced plans to bring resolutions" to General Convention. "I have faith that the church gathered in legislative session can discern the voice of the Spirit, through faithful listening to one another, honest sharing, and prayer," he said.

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.

96-1565

Review panel appointed in dispute over priest's election as rector of Southern Virginia parish

by James H. Thrall

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Members of Christ Church in Danville, Virginia, and two priests of the Diocese of Southern Virginia lodged the complaint claiming that Vest has violated the laws of the Episcopal Church by refusing to accept the church's call to the Rev. Peter Toon.

Toon, formerly of the Diocese of Quincy, was received into the Episcopal Church from the Church of England in 1991. He has been an advocate of "traditionalist" positions opposed to such changes in the Episcopal Church as the ordination of women.

The panel is chaired by Bishop John C. Buchanan of the Diocese of West Missouri, and includes Bishops C. Christopher Epting of Iowa, Larry E. Maze of Arkansas, Russell E. Jacobus of Fond du Lac, and James M. Coleman of West Tennessee.

If the panel determines that the charge, if proven true, would constitute a violation of Episcopal Church disciplinary canons, a second panel called a board of inquiry will be appointed. The board of inquiry, made up of clergy and laity, will determine whether there are sufficient facts to support the charge.

Only after those two panels have reviewed the charge would it be considered by the Court for the Trial of a Bishop, a body of nine bishops that would hear the case.

A response to the charge was expected from Vest in September, but he was granted an extension to the end of the month. The parties bringing the charge would then have 15 days to file a response to Vest's statement.

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.



news briefs

96-1566

Advertisement chides Browning on homosexuality stance

(ENS) Six of the 10 bishops who brought charges against Bishop Walter Righter, retired bishop of Iowa, for ordaining a non-celibate homosexual as a deacon joined others in signing an open letter to Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning attacking his statements on homosexuality. The letter, sponsored by the organization Concerned Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Church and printed as an advertisement in the *Washington Times*, September 9, criticizes Browning's recent address to Executive Council in which he asserted that "it is possible for gay men and women in committed relationships to be wholesome examples." Browning said, "We see such examples everyday. Let us remember that Jesus said precious little about homosexuality, being more concerned with hardness of heart. Would that we could turn our attention similarly." Among the 39 signatures on the letter were those of Bishops Terence Kelshaw of Rio Grande, William Wantland of Eau Claire, Jack Iker of Fort Worth, John Howe of Central Florida, Maurice Benitez of Texas, and John David Schofield of San Joaquin, who brought a presentment against Righter that led to a prolonged ecclesiastical court process. The Concerned Clergy and Laity group in the past has been highly critical of what it sees as Browning's liberal positions.

Suit in Diocese of Newark raises threat of malpractice charges

(ENS) A legal ruling appealed to the Supreme Court of the State of New Jersey could open a new line of attack against clergy who are charged with sexual misconduct: lawsuits for malpractice. In June, the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court ruled that a priest in the Diocese of Newark who allegedly had a sexual relationship with a parishioner he was counselling could be sued for malpractice. While other courts have shied away from upholding malpractice claims against clergy out of concern that cases would violate First Amendment protection, the appeals court noted that "it is unlikely that defendants will assert that sex with a counselee is sanctioned by or somehow involves the tenets of the Episcopal Church, or would otherwise create an entanglement with religious beliefs or rituals of First Amendment concerns." Whether malpractice charges could be brought for behavior other than sexual misconduct was not addressed by the appellate court. The ruling stemmed from charges brought against the Rev. Alexander MacDonell, former rector of All Saints',

Bergenfield, and St. Luke's, Haworth. The current rector at the parishes, the Rev. Fletcher Harper, is also named in the suit for allegedly mishandling the complaint by identifying the complainant along with details about the charges against MacDonell in a letter read to the congregation. Bishop John Spong of Newark is also named for allegedly mishandling the complaint by approving the communication to the congregation.

Program nurtures music in small churches

(ENS) When the Episcopal Church launches the Year of the Small Church in 1997, the Standing Commission on Church Music will already have a significant leg up. The commission's Leadership Program for Musicians Serving Small Congregations held its second annual national conference this past summer. So far, "leadership program coordinators" from 76 dioceses (including Haiti, Europe, Panama, Mexico and Alaska) have attended at least one of the two conferences, learning how to teach the six courses covered by the curriculum. Clergy and musicians from all denominations who complete the six courses in a local program earn "The Presiding Bishop's Diploma in Church Music." The program was established to address the shortage of long-term continuing education opportunities for musicians and clergy who lead music for their congregations. The topics covered by the program include: Leadership and Accompaniment of Congregational Song, The Hymnody of the Christian Church, Essentials of Good Liturgy, Principles of Music Leadership, Voice Training for Choirs, Teaching New Music to the Congregation, and Resources for an Effective Music Ministry.

Treasurer charged in \$800 000 theft from US Lutheran synod

(END) The former treasurer of a regional Lutheran body in the United States of America was recently charged with embezzling \$800,000 and spending it on holiday homes, college tuition for his two sons and other personal expenses. George A. Patrick, former treasurer of the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), was arrested by Connecticut authorities on September 19. If found guilty of the charges of larceny and money laundering, Patrick could face a prison term of up to 20 years and a fine of up to \$25,000. The synod expects to recover the missing money through an insurance policy. Synod Bishop Robert L. Isaksen said that he was "personally grieving both my misplaced trust and my inability to suspect that something was amiss."

South Africa experiences radical shift in church membership

(END) The percentage of Christians among South Africa's non-black population groups is declining significantly, but there has been a dramatic increase in the number of black Christians, according to Dutch Reformed Church theologian Jurgen Hendriks, co-author of the recently published book *Meeting the Future*. However, Hendriks said that the black Christians are joining the African "independent" churches, not the mainline churches that originated in Europe. The African independent churches are "becoming South Africa's

new mainline churches," he stated. "The era of Western-oriented Christianity in South Africa is fast disappearing. We are seeing the same trends which Europe experienced just after World War II and the United States in 1965."

SACC rejects attack on clergy who fought apartheid

(ENS) The South African Council of Churches (SACC) recently rejected an attack by Chief Manosuthu Buthelezi, head of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, criticizing "political clergy" who supported "revolutionary organizations" in the struggle against apartheid. Buthelezi's attack came during testimony to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is holding hearings on the human rights atrocities committed during the apartheid era. He singled out the World Council of Churches Program to Combat Racism, which gave humanitarian assistance from a special fund to liberation movements fighting white rule. The WCC said that Buthelezi "is wrong as the WCC record--which is open and clear--shows." The SACC accused Buthelezi of "self-inflicted paranoia" in a letter delivered to the commission's chair, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a former general secretary of the SACC.

Lutherans consider closer cooperation with WCC

(ENI) The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which shares headquarters with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, might consider much closer cooperation in the future. Both organizations have faced financial difficulties in recent years and, as a result, have searched for more flexible and efficient structures. LWF president Gottfried Brakemeier said at the annual meeting of the LWF that he "could well imagine in future the LWF being a department within the World Council of Churches. Why not, if the WCC allowed confessional bodies a certain independence?" He pointed to a trend among ecumenical organizations to "simplify" structures in order to consolidate programs. LWF secretary Ishmael Noko said that the WCC's discussion of its future vision and structure "is of utmost interest to the LWF."

South African policeman reveals attempts to poison Chikane

(ENI) Former South African security police officer Eugene de Kock told the Pretoria Supreme Court that the "dirty tricks" section of the security force attempted in 1989 to poison the Rev. Frank Chikane, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches. Chikane became violently ill during a visit to the United States. De Kock said that a drug had been put on Chikane's clothing and "if he had fallen ill in any other place than America, he would surely have died." De Kock has been convicted of 89 charges, including six counts of murder, stemming from the time when he was head of the police hit squad.

Noted author and speaker Henri Nouwen dies of heart attack

(ENS) The Rev. Henri Nouwen, pastor of the L'Arche Daybreak Community of Toronto and author of more than 30 books, died September 21 of a heart attack. Nouwen, who was a frequent speaker in Episcopal church settings including the Indianapolis General Convention, was born in the Netherlands in 1932 and ordained into the Roman Catholic Church. He emigrated to the United States in 1964 where he taught at Notre Dame, Harvard and Yale Universities. In 1985, Nouwen left the academic world to work in the L'Arche Daybreak community, one of 100 communities in 30 countries for people with developmental handicaps. "I share the shock and grief of people around the world who have been spiritually nourished by Henri Nouwen," said Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning. "His life and words reflected the love of God so powerfully that being with him was a reminder that we are God's beloved." Nouwen had "accepted my invitation to come to our General Convention in 1997 and we had some wonderful conversations about it," Browning said. "It was a privilege, and a joy, to be his friend. I can imagine the angels welcoming him."

Methodists reach historic agreement with Reformation churches

(END) Church officials recently reached an agreement to promote closer fellowship between Europe's historic Reformation churches and Europe's Methodist churches. The agreement on church fellowship was announced by the executive committee of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship (LCF), which comprises 91--mainly European--signatory churches from Lutheran, Reformed and United church traditions, and by the European Methodist Council. The agreement means that Christians belonging to the different traditions are able to share Holy Communion, and recognize the ministry of those ordained as pastors in each other's churches. It also means the full participation of representatives of the European Methodist churches in the executive committee, working groups, and the general assemblies of the LCF.

Interfaith web site offers database of religious information

(ENS) Official news and documentation from national and global church bodies, ecumenical agencies and other faith organizations are available at Worldwide Faith News (<http://www.wfn.org>), a World Wide Web site accessible without charge to all Internet users. Users can search the full text of all documents in the archive, subscribe to a mailing list to receive all documents as they are posted or browse the most recent documents. The National Council of Churches developed WFN and the Trinity Grants Program of Trinity Church in New York City provided funds, first for the feasibility study and then for start-up expenses. Much in-kind support has been provided by the NCC and other WFN participants. WFN went online December 24, 1995, for a period of testing. Since then, faith groups have posted over 2,000 news releases to the database, which they keep current with their latest releases. WFN was announced officially "open for business" August 30 to the Religion Newswriters Association and September 16 to denominational and ecumenical communicators

in New York for the NCC Communications Week.

Catholic celibacy rule may be changed, says English cardinal

(ENI) Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster in London, said recently that the Roman Catholic Church's rule that priests must be celibate could be relaxed. He argued that many "excellent" people were being lost to the church because they want to be married. Hume's remarks were made during an interview on the BBC's Radio 4 the day after the resignation of Roderick Wright, Roman Catholic Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Scotland. Wright is apparently in hiding with Kathleen Macphee, a divorced 40-year-old nurse and mother of three, with whom he is said to have had a long-standing relationship. "It [the celibacy rule] is not divine law," Cardinal Hume said. "It is church law, so any pope or general council could change it." He was immediately supported by another senior prelate, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, who said it was only a matter of time before the ordination of married men was discussed at the Vatican. Hume carefully balanced his comments, praising the Catholic Church's tradition of celibacy for priests. "Many of us would find it very hard to give all our energy and our time to our ministry, and to give good quality time to our families," he said. "It is not a bad thing to have people who can witness to love without sex."

Cuba's churches face ethical challenge in changing times

(ENI) Cuba's churches are growing fast and finding a new role in trying to promote "ethical values" in the face of the country's economic crisis, Hector Mendez, a prominent Presbyterian pastor from Cuba, said recently. But Mendez noted that in one area of church work--ecumenical cooperation--there was now a great weakness. "We used to describe the Cuban ecumenical movement as one of the strongest movements in Latin America," Mendez said. For many years, while Christians faced discrimination in Cuba because of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and there were few people in the churches, ecumenism was important because it brought church people together. "Because we were few in each church, we had the impression of being bigger," he said. But since 1990 when the country's leader, Fidel Castro, pledged to end discrimination against Christians, the churches have grown rapidly and have begun to take over some social tasks previously carried out by the government. "The churches are [now] busy with their own projects, and their own people, and therefore there is very little time left to share with other people," Mendez said. "There are good relations between the [Protestant] churches and with the Roman Catholic Church, but there is not a strong commitment to work together."

'Go for it, get married,' Desmond Tutu tells Nelson Mandela

(ENI) Many--but not all--of South Africa's religious leaders in South Africa have given their informal approval to President Nelson Mandela's recent romance with Graca Machel, widow of the former Mozambican president, Samora Machel. Rumors of romance

have been circulating widely since Mandela divorced his wife, Winnie, earlier this year. An ANC official recently announced that Mandela and Machel were in love. Desmond Tutu, who retired this year as Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, said he had discussed the relationship with Mandela, aged 78. They should "go for it" and "get married," Tutu said. He was reported to have said earlier that the president was setting a bad example for the youth of South Africa by not getting married. Machel was quoted recently as having said that she and Mandela would not marry. "I belong to Mozambique, and I will always be the wife of Samora Machel," she said. Samora Machel died in an airplane accident over South Africa, near the Mozambican border, in October 1986. Machel said she understood that Mandela, as head of state, would have to set a good example. "I understand their [the churches'] point, but we have problems, and we discussed this very thoroughly."

Warsaw finally approves first Anglican chaplaincy in 50 years

(ENI) The Polish government recently granted full rights to the country's first Anglican chaplaincy since World War II. The Rev. David Williams, the first resident Anglican priest to minister in Poland in 50 years, said that official registration would enable the chaplaincy to "operate freely" in conformity with Polish law. "We are and will remain only a tiny community here, and we have no intention of taking members from other churches," the British priest said. "However, recognition as a legitimate Christian body will give a sense of rightness to our activities." The chaplaincy, inaugurated in October 1995 by the Anglican Bishop of Europe, John Hind, has about 60 members, and is one of 16 Anglican congregations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Together these congregations form an archdeaconry of the Aegean and Danube. Besides the Roman Catholic Church, which claims more than 90 percent of the country's 38.6 million citizens, about 130 religious groups possess full rights in Poland, including 70 Christian churches, and 20 Buddhist and Hindu sects.

Church of England releases latest statistics

(ENS) The decline in the Church of England's membership seems to have bottomed out according to the most recent figures published by the Central Board of Finance in *Church Statistics 1996*. Sunday church attendance was at a rate of 22 individuals per thousand English citizens for 1993 and 1994; Sunday communicants have been 18 or 19 per thousand citizens since 1976; while over the past two years Christmas communicants were 38 per thousand and Easter communicants were 33 per thousand. The report stated that a quarter of English babies born in 1993 and 1994 were baptized in the Church of England. The proportion was just over half in 1960 and roughly two-thirds up until 1950. Confirmations dropped from 48,000 in 1994 to 44,000 in 1995. This is thought to reflect greater emphasis on confirmation as a ceremony of adult commitment and the decline of the old custom of administering confirmation to schoolchildren in their early teens. In 1995, 33 percent of males confirmed, and 41 percent of females, were aged 20 or over. Meanwhile, Anglicans

have become more generous in their support of the church. Total parish income rose by four percent in real terms to 397,598,000 English pounds in 1994.

Man cleared in Nashotah House sexual assault trial

(ENS) A Connecticut man recently became the second man associated with the Nashotah House Episcopal seminary to be acquitted of charges that he sexually assaulted a teenage boy at the seminary in the 1980s. Three other men similarly accused have been convicted of sexual assault. A Waukesha County Circuit Court jury found Anthony G. Miller, 36, not guilty of three counts of second-degree sexual assault of a child. The boy told police Miller assaulted him at the Wisconsin seminary in 1988 when he was 14. On the witness stand, Miller adamantly denied having any sexual contact with the boy, who was living at the institution with his family at the time. Miller declined to comment after the verdicts were read but embraced his attorney, Leonard Adent, of Waukesha, and smiled at the jury. His accuser said his reaction to the verdicts was "total and complete disbelief." The accuser said that Miller "has to answer to a higher court now." Former Episcopal priest Eugene Maxey and former seminarian Charles McCray pleaded no contest to sexual assault for molesting the boy, and are serving prison terms. Russell Martin, an Episcopal priest, was convicted by a jury of sexual assault and also was sentenced to prison. Jason Samuel, an Episcopal priest who was similarly charged, was acquitted in July 1995.

Aleksy fails to meet Pope in Hungary

(ENI) Pope John Paul II's recent trip to Hungary to celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of one of Christendom's oldest monasteries was blemished by the failure of Patriarch Aleksy II, the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, to join him in the festivities. Chosen for its ecumenical significance, the monastery was built before 1054, the year of the schism between the Eastern and Western Christian churches. But, as a Hungarian official pointed out, Hungary, a predominantly Catholic country, was not considered neutral enough by the Russians for a meeting between the two churches. A spokesman for the Patriarchate in Moscow said timing was another problem. The meeting was scheduled a month before celebrations in Ukraine and Belarus of the anniversary of the creation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which broke away from the Orthodox Church 400 years ago. "For the Orthodox Church, this event is very sad, and not something joyful to celebrate," the spokesman said. At this point, he said, the chances of a meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch in the near future is unlikely.

Report warns that cults pose 'irrational' risk to world security

(ENI) Religious sects will pose an increasing risk to national security, requiring tougher action to combat those operating outside the law, according to a recent report *The Prophets of Doom* published by the London-based Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies. The report suggested that traditional conflicts between "relatively rational

players" were being replaced by threats "by irrational cults who want to make the apocalypse a self-fulfilling prophecy." Religious "cults" represented a serious threat to society, the report said, because of the "combination of individuals belonging to a group without rational ends, who are not in a bargaining relationship with the authorities, who are reckless about their own survival, and who possess the ability and inclination to use hitherto taboo methods." The report suggested that "although there can be no question of infringing an individual's liberty to follow whatever religion he or she chooses," security services should devote resources to collecting intelligence on "subversive, anti-social and potentially violent cults, and, where appropriate, be prepared to act pre-emptively against them." Hubback mentioned the Aum Shinri Kyo sect, blamed for a nerve gas attack on the Tokyo underground last year. The organization, Hubback said, had recruited at least 60 members of Japan's national army, and had knowledge of nuclear, biological and laser weapons.

Tutsi Roman Catholic archbishop murdered in Burundi

(ENS) Roman Catholic Archbishop Joachim Ruthuna of Burundi and three other people were murdered in an ambush on his car September 9. A Burundi army spokesman cited the reports of witnesses who saw Ruthuna's body burning inside the car. "He is definitely dead. A deacon saw his body burning in the car," spokesman Lt. Col. Longin Minani told Reuters News Service. Minani said a Catholic deacon and others heard the attack on the car and managed to drag the corpse of one of the two nuns also killed out of the vehicle and hide it in a building. Minani said the burning body of the archbishop was too heavy to lift and when they returned to the ambush site it was gone. Ruthuna was booed at a July funeral for Tutsi massacre victims when he said there were extremists among both the Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority in the ethnically-split country. "There are no names for this. I have seen it many times but I condemn violence on both sides," he said at the chaotic mass funeral for 304 massacred Tutsis.

People

The Rt. Rev. James Moodey, retired bishop of Ohio, has been appointed by the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Maine to serve as visiting bishop for the diocese until an episcopal election in late 1997. As visiting bishop, Moodey will spend several days in Maine each month and have a regular visitation schedule, at which time he will be available to area parishes and individuals for sacramental and pastoral ministrations. His first trip will be to the Androscoggin Valley Region for services on October 20.



news features

96-1567

Hurricane Fran inflicts swath of destruction

by E. T. Malone Jr.

(ENS) At gray, overcast daylight, in sporadic showers and wind gusts, clergy and parishioners ventured forth through downed power lines and splintered trees to check on how Hurricane Fran had dealt with the Episcopal churches of the Diocese of North Carolina.

It could have been a lot worse.

Despite hurricane-force winds that penetrated more than a hundred miles inland and inflicted widespread property damage in their path, most Episcopal churches suffered nothing more serious than downed trees and leaking roofs.

But some parishioners in both the dioceses of North Carolina and East Carolina lost their homes in the early September storm that was followed by wide-spread flooding. Food banks in the area are exhausted, and the weather that destroyed crops and disrupted fishing also destroyed the livelihoods of thousands of migrant farmworkers.

In Chocowinity in East Carolina, the Rev. Bill Etters of Trinity Church said of some of his parishioners' homes: "There is nothing there; they have disappeared."

Emergency grants of \$25,000 each were sent by the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief to both dioceses as well as to the Diocese of the Dominican Republic.

Farmworkers caught in storm's path

The plight of the predominately Hispanic migrant farmworkers has become increasingly desperate, reported Holly Christofferson, director of Episcopal Farmworker Ministry in Newton Grove, North Carolina, a ministry of the dioceses of North Carolina and East Carolina.

"The last tobacco that was still on the plants was just destroyed," she said. "Some people just recently came up three weeks ago to pick it, and they haven't yet been able to work."

In camps scattered around the area, about a hour south of Raleigh, trailers for housing the workers have been badly damaged, but the workers "still have to live in one half of the trailer," she said. "It's starting to get cold, so we're delivering a lot of blankets."

The Rev. Antonio "Tony" Rojas, working to establish worship services in the camps, said his congregants "have suffered very much. They need to pay rent. They need to buy food. They are almost crazy."

Along the coast, seasonal workers in the crab-packing plants have also hit hard times under an industry slow-down, reported the Rev. Nicholas Ibarra, vicar of Hispanic ministry at St. Matthew's Church in Yeatesville, North Carolina. Operators of crab boats pulled up their traps before the storm, he said, and were too busy dealing with their own damaged and flooded homes to fish again.

"Most of the people got into survival mode," Ibarra said. "Many have them have started leaving already."

In the nearby town of Belhaven, he said, St. James Church was extensively damaged, and "60 percent of the houses were flooded."

Historic building felled

The major exception for North Carolina church damage was in Burlington, in the eastern piedmont, where a 117-year-old frame, carpenter gothic parish house of the former St. Athanasius Church was crushed by a massive limb of a giant oak that fell during the storm. The old building, on the National Register of Historic Places, was a meeting place for Girl Scouts.

The former parish house is on the property of the Church of the Holy Comforter, where an *ad hoc* committee was quickly formed to decide whether to attempt to repair the building, valued at about \$25,000.

"Contractors have told us that it would take about \$100,000 to fix it," said the Rev. David Williams, Holy Comforter's rector. "And the parish has been through two recent capital campaigns."

Preservationists hope to save the building, but others are reluctant to spend that much money when the parish's other buildings--used for the day-to-day operations of the congregation--are in need of renovation, he said.

Ministry in the midst of destruction

Another parish, St. John's, Wake Forest, lost part of its roof and had heavy water damage, estimated at about \$30,000 in the nave. Despite that, the congregation was serving free hot meals to the community, which was particularly hard hit by the storm. "We want people to feel welcome and know that we're open to everybody who's in need," said the Rev. Jerry Fisher, priest-in-charge.

In East Carolina, two Muslim Bosnian refugees had an opportunity to repay the hospitality they received. Brothers Baki and Mesa Karabegovic, sponsored by St. Andrews-on-the-Sound Church of Wilmington, lived for a year with Betty Klemn, a 74-year-old widow living in Wrightsville Beach. With 115-mile-per-hour winds and 16-foot tidal waves threatening her home, they took her into their new apartment in Wilmington, and then helped

her clean up the three feet of water the storm left in her garage and storage room.

When the brothers called their parents, still in a Croatian refugee center, to tell them about the hurricane, their mother's direction was firm: "She took care of you. Now you **MUST** take good care of her."

Sharing the shower

"People were trading off places to go and have showers," Fisher reported. Almost everyone had food spoiling in refrigerators and freezers. One family had to toss out about 600 ears of corn they had in a freezer.

"Since we had power and a big commercial gas stove at the church, we invited folks to bring their food there," he said. "We cooked up all this food and invited in the community. Some of it we carried down to a subsidized housing unit. We did it again on Monday night and for lunch Tuesday, until we used it all up.

"Some parishioners opened their homes to Southeastern Baptist Seminary students or to local families to come in and take showers," Fisher related. "One nice, older lady in the congregation had no food--she had to come to church to eat--but she had two bathrooms, a shower upstairs and one downstairs. She was extremely gracious, opening her home, the house was full of people--most of whom she didn't know from Adam's house cat--standing in line to get into her showers.

"In the middle of all this tumult there came a knock on the door. When she answered it, there stood two Mormon missionaries," Fisher said. "'We've come to ask if you know about Jesus,' they said."

--E.T. Malone, Jr., is editor of "The Communicant," newspaper of the Diocese of North Carolina. James H. Thrall, deputy director of news and information, contributed to this article.

96-1568

Financial crisis forcing World Council of Churches to consider major changes

by Patricia Lefevere

(ENS) Facing a budget deficit of over a million dollars and persistent questions about its identity and role in the ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is entering a period of intense self-examination and restructure.

In a blunt address to the WCC's 156-member Central Committee meeting in Geneva

September 12-20, General Secretary Konrad Raiser indicated that traditional income from many of the council's 332 Protestant and Orthodox member churches had dwindled and would decline further with no significant rise in income foreseen.

Income has already fallen nearly 50 percent this decade, Raiser told the church's policy-setting committee, observers and members of the press. In 1991 income was 118 million Swiss francs but predictions for income next year will drop to Swiss franc 61 million.

Moreover, losses on investments and forward currency contracts and unrealistically high budget exchange rates have diminished the council's reserves, he noted.

The WCC has already reduced its staff nearly 20 percent and further cuts required over the next six months will bring the staff down to 190, stimulating more anxiety and lowered morale, Raiser observed.

Basic mandate not in jeopardy

Those grim facts notwithstanding, Raiser stressed that the health of the ecumenical movement was not terminal and that the WCC's "basic mandate is not in jeopardy." Despite uncertainty, financial hardships "have not paralysed our work," he said.

Representatives of the 400 million Christians in the WCC seemed to make the general secretary's optimism their own and reelected him to a second five-year term. Raiser, 58, a German Lutheran theologian, has worked at the Ecumenical Center since 1969, with a 10-year hiatus (1983-93) to teach theology and run the ecumenical institute at the University of the Ruhr in Bochum, Germany. His second term will expire in 2002.

Onto his shoulders and those of the council's seven presidents and its committees falls the task of restructuring the world body. For some, like Bishop Bjorn Bue of the Church of Norway, this means returning to "the passion that set the hearts of our forefathers on fire."

That task is more easily dreamed than accomplished. In the view of Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, a former staff member who now heads the Reformed Church in America, the WCC is "hopelessly enmeshed in governing structures that call people together to make decisions that are neither clear nor well-implemented. Our decision-making structures should be small. Doing business should not be the primary purpose of our meetings."

More than a financial crisis

Much of the talk about the future of the ecumenical movement and the role of the WCC centered around discussion of the WCC's "Common Understanding and Vision" and of what image it would take to Harare, Zimbabwe, in September 1998 when it celebrates its eighth assembly and 50th anniversary.

The assembly's theme, "Turn to God, Rejoice in Hope," may offer a spiritual path out of what few see as a strictly financial dilemma. Dr. Paul Crow, ecumenical officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), noted that American churches faced similar fiscal woes. "This is more than a financial crisis--it's a crisis in faith."

Crow said in an interview that both the WCC and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA were created with models of large bureaucracies. For decades both were able "to place big money behind projects...But too much money leads us to say that we are in charge and that leads us away from God," he said.

"The era of ecumenical bureaucracy is over," Crow contended. "The future will require leaders who have vision and know how to be creative."

Recovering a basic purpose

It will also demand some "real cuts to balance the budget," and most probably a professional fundraiser who can create resources, said Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning of the Episcopal Church, a member of the Central Committee. He said that he felt most sorry for those whose jobs would cease. Downsizing in the Episcopal Church in recent years left him with no doubt that the church has lost "very gifted people who had a calling to do a particular ministry. That is devastating."

Browning lauded Raiser's "sensitive" handling of the problem and said he had "complete faith" in Raiser's ability to lead the WCC towards regaining its focus. "I have a sense that we will recover our basic purpose. I'm not fearful that the WCC will disappear. It will come back strongly," he predicted.

Despite much apprehension expressed about the council's decision to go to Harare where some fear the Zimbabwe government's stated opposition to gays and lesbians may lead to conflict or demonstrations by some participants, Browning found the WCC choice "courageous."

"I think going to Harare and affirming the African churches--which is long overdue--will give a great boost to the churches there." He also thought it would be "a great learning experience for non-African churches."

Sexuality issues could be explosive

However, Father Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church in America registered his fear that the homosexuality issue "could explode" the Harare assembly. In an interview, he said that the issue might prove to be "a rather limited part of the assembly," but could "overtake it," depending on how the press reported it. "It would be very embarrassing to church leaders when they return home if all that was reported (of the assembly)...were these volatile and extremely divisive issues."

All the more reason why the WCC should not delay in addressing matters of human sexuality, said Browning. But he said that he did not expect the WCC to do so formally in Harare.

Following what Raiser called "the first open, sincere and very serious discussion about the issue" at a subcommittee meeting in Geneva, a way must be found, he said, to bring the topic before the 1997 Central Committee gathering.

Clearly a subject which has so divided churches in North America may have the same

effect globally and many observers say that the stakes could be high. Some delegates indicated, for example, that putting sexuality on the WCC agenda might force their churches to reconsider their relationship with the council.

Moving towards an open debate?

Yet the Central Committee apparently moved closer to such an open debate by sending to the member churches a four-year study on ecclesiology and ethics. "The goal of the current study is to articulate once again that being and doing cannot be separated," said Professor Anna Marie Aagaard of the Lutheran Church in Denmark, a WCC president.

The study raises at least two important questions for local churches, said another WCC president, Dr. Aaron Tolen of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon: How can churches enhance the prospects for common decision-making on ethical questions in their home contexts and what would such local ecumenical engagement imply for the international fellowship of churches?

Merging doctrinal and moral issues has been an intrinsic element in the ecumenical movement. The WCC was born in 1947 of a merger between the Faith and Order and Life and Work branches of the movement.

"We can no longer separate the non-theological, non-doctrinal," Raiser said at a closing press conference. "They have moved into the center of our pastoral concerns." He said that the WCC could help establish criteria and catalyze further discussion of such "urgent" issues as homosexuality and HIV/AIDS.

In regards to HIV/AIDS the Central Committee sent to the churches a major report prepared by a consultative group of 20 medical professionals, lawyers and theologians. It challenged the churches to become better informed, more active and more faithful witnesses to the gospel of reconciliation in their own lives and in their communities on this topic.

The report, a result of 30 months of consultation, charts the "relentless and frightening pace" with which the disease has now spread to 28 million people, infecting 7,000 new persons daily, including 1,400 children born with the virus.

Dr. Christoph Benn, a German doctor and Lutheran theologian who moderated the consultative group, noted that "an infection or a disease can never be a reason to deny anybody the right to be a full member of this community."

New program to overcome violence

Despite talk of economic woes, global health hazards and continuing racial and political strife around the world, the WCC unveiled a Program to Overcome Violence, first suggested at Johannesburg in 1994. Given the council's financial constraints, the initiative hopes to encourage local churches to address violence in their societies and to share experience of conflict-solving with each other.

On the final day of the Central Committee meeting, the POV launched its "Peace to the City" campaign. By mid-November the WCC hopes to select seven world cities in which to

undertake the campaign. Because cities are often the venue for familial, criminal and police violence, for arms manufacturing and gun sales and for conditions which lead to violence, anti-violence program will be offered as models for these cities.

The Rev. Margot Kaessmann of the Evangelical Church in Germany, who moderates the WCC's Justice, Peace and Creation Unit, said she thinks that the Program to Overcome Violence "has the potential to become the most significant moral and ethical enterprise of the WCC. As individuals and nations seek violent solutions to conflicts, the churches have to say a clear 'No.'"

--Patricia Lefevere is a New Jersey-based freelance writer who writes often on ecumenical issues.

96-1569

Porvoo Agreement lights road to unity for 50 million European Christians

by Patricia Lefevere

(ENS) Despite the serious, sometimes somber mood of many delegates to the World Council of Churches' Central Committee meeting in Geneva September 12-20, participants celebrated some major progress on the road to unity. Several European Christian churches, for example, were rejoicing in a new ecumenical relationship that fuels the dream of unity.

The Porvoo Agreement brings into partnership six Lutheran churches in the Nordic and Baltic region and the four Anglican churches of Great Britain and Ireland and means that 50 million European Christians are closer to one another than they have been in centuries.

The signatory Lutheran Churches of Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden along with their Anglican partners in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales have jointly affirmed baptism, Eucharist and ministry in each other's churches, including use of the sign of the historic episcopal succession.

Some 1,000 Christians attended the signing ceremony and celebration at Norway's ancient Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim on September 1. The following day the primates of the signing churches met, joined by Danish and Latvian representatives who have not yet signed the declaration but continue to cooperate with the other churches.

A week later many of the same 25 bishops and five archbishops met in the Cathedral of Tallinn, Estonia, where the ceremony was again "joyful and solemn with much greeting by all the bishops," said Mary Tanner, moderator of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission

who attended both ceremonies.

Kairos moment for European churches

"This is a *kairos* moment for the churches of Northern Europe," said Tanner, who is General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England. The agreement to explore interchangeable ministries, full eucharistic communion and doing mission together whenever possible are "probably the most significant move toward visible unity since the Reformation," Tanner said in an interview.

For the Baltic churches, Porvoo signals that they are now "back in Europe," she added. The agreement, which takes its name from the Finnish city of Porvoo in whose cathedral the drafters of the statement celebrated Eucharist together after reaching agreement on the final text in 1992, follows a series of European ecumenical advances, Tanner said. She pointed to the 1973 Leuenberg agreement between Lutheran and Reformed churches and the Meissen agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany and the Church of England earlier this decade.

Tanner recalled "the wonderful moment of unity" experienced when British and German church leaders processed into Westminster Abbey and prayed together at the tomb of the "unknown warrior" before putting their names to the Meissen document. She said that she expected a similarly "wonderful event" on November 28 when the Porvoo signers hold their third ceremony at Westminster.

Tanner thought that Porvoo will also give impetus to the proposed Concordat between the Episcopal Church of the USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "Such agreements are built upon a close relationship over a long period; they come out of solid theological conversations among our churches," she said. She likened the signing of Porvoo to "the reception into our lives of these dialogues."

Among the strengths of Porvoo, she said, is that it has set up structures of mutual accountability to implement common mission and decision-making among Lutherans and Anglicans.

The Rev. David Perry, the Episcopal Church's ecumenical officer, said that the Porvoo Agreement was "a hopeful sign for all Christians" because it represents "the flowering of mutual faith and witness."

Perry is convinced that Porvoo and the proposed Concordat between Lutherans and Episcopalians in the United States "spring from the same desire for unity." He quickly added that "the task now is to live out the spirit of these agreements in faithful life and witness throughout the church."

96-1570

International debt conference report urges reform of World Bank and International Monetary Fund

by James H. Thrall

(ENS) Human concern, as well as economic principles, should guide the money lending policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, according to a report released in August by the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations.

Established by the Bretton Woods Conference at the end of World War II, the two organizations were designed to assist poor countries to develop their economies and become trading partners with the West.

Building on a May conference on "A Christian Response to the International Debt Crisis," the report urges the two organizations to pursue policies "strongly based in principles of fairness, justice, such that they must preserve the moral integrity and sanctity of human life."

Unfortunately, the report observes, the organizations' policies have instead "at times magnified underdevelopment in a number of countries around the world, even at a time when globalization has brought new opportunities and economic success to other countries."

While suggesting specific reforms, the report's tone is "very positive in its orientation," said the Rev. Dr. Johncy Itty, associate for human rights at the Anglican Communion Office. "It's saying, 'Yes, reforms are taking place. Some of the reforms haven't been focused enough.' And it's pointing out that there is much more to do."

"In spite of recent changes," the report notes, "structural adjustment and reform programs still too often give too little attention to human needs, poverty reduction and protection of vulnerable groups, especially to basic health, nutrition and education of young children, young people and their families."

Collaboration sought

The conference itself, held at the Episcopal Church Center in New York, took a collaborative rather than confrontative approach, Itty said, and was attended by representatives of both the financial organizations. Speakers included theologian Gustavo Gutierrez of Lima, Peru, Sabine O'Hara of Rennsylear Polytechnical Institute, Herman Daly of the University of Maryland, and Bishop James Ottley, Anglican observer at the United Nations.

The conference was sponsored in part by General Theological Seminary and other seminaries in the New York region, and the Episcopal Church's Peace and Justice Ministries. Participants included academics and church representatives, as well as members of the Anglican Peace and Justice Network attending an annual international gathering.

Among other recommendations, the report urges greater public accountability and

involvement in the organizations' lending practices, as well as greater sensitivity to social and ecological effects. It also calls for selective use of "debt relief," or the forgiving of debt "on a case-by-case basis as a direct means to improve the human, social, and environmental conditions of a country."

"We would emphasize that it is neither new nor inappropriate for the church to speak out for human concerns and economic policy," the report observes. "From the earliest days of the Old Testament, the churches have expressed concern with the impact of debt on the poor and weak--and called for remedial action. Economic policy always needs to be judged by the deepest of ethical standards, even if at times, current economic orthodoxy appears to neglect this."

Itty reported that most responses to the report have been "very favorable that churches are involved in these issues." An educational program may be developed, he said, to "rewrite this information in a form that parishes might use" to teach their members "how the international economy affects them, how it affects unemployment, how it affects trade."

Peace and Justice Network focuses on finances

Dividing their annual meeting between Washington D.C. and New York to take advantage of the debt conference, members of the international Anglican Peace and Justice Network used their gathering as an opportunity to compare notes on their individual work.

"It's the kind of feeling that you've got friends out there," said Bishop Michael Hare Duke, retired bishop of St. Andrew's, Scotland. "Life can feel pretty isolated. It also helps to be in touch with someone else who might help make things happen."

Reports at the meeting touched on situations in countries around the world, including Burundi, Myanmar, Korea and the Sudan. In Washington, Robert E. Rubin, secretary to the treasury, briefed the group on the economic impact of the international financial organizations. And in New York, the members participated in the plenary sessions of the debt conference.

Hare Duke noted that "it was heartening to learn of the concern of the World Bank and IMF to resolve the debt, to hear of their proposals to provide a way out of the unsustainable burdens that some of the worst-hit countries now carry." Those proposals, he said, and the thrust of the debt conference itself emphasizing human need, were not just exercises in sentimentality "but good political and business sense."

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.

96-1571

Generosity continues as church groups assist rebuilding and target racism

by Jack Donovan

(ENS) Church members across the nation continue to respond generously to appeals for rebuilding black churches destroyed by a rash of arsonist fires.

The Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief reported donations of nearly \$600,000 for its burned churches appeal and the National Council of Churches (NCC) Burned Churches Fund reported a total of approximately \$9 million in cash and in-kind gifts.

PB Fund board member Bishop Robert Tharp of East Tennessee took the fund's June resolution to restore "congregational life to affected communities" to bishops in dioceses where the most damage has occurred. He is urging those bishops to bring needs assessments to the October House of Bishops' meeting in Pennsylvania so that issues of funding distribution can be addressed.

In South Carolina, the state where the most churches have been burned, the two Episcopal dioceses are giving support to the efforts of an ecumenical group, the Christian Action Council (CAC). Archdeacon Frederick Byrd of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina praised the CAC's Sabbath of Support program as "a promising way to address the underlying issues that give rise to racism." Byrd said that Suffragan Bishop William Skilton of South Carolina has written to the PB's Fund to urge support for the project. Columbia, South Carolina, is the site for an October 24-26 NCC-led anti-racism conference which will focus the development of strategies for justice and reconciliation.

On September 1, Bishop Richard Grein of New York hand-delivered a check for \$60,000 to the Morning Star Baptist Church in Greensboro, Alabama, destroyed by fire in early June. Grein made the presentation to Morning Star's pastor Willie Coleman and his congregation at a special ceremony also attended by Assistant Bishop Furman Stough of Alabama. "Money can't take away the pain of the fire," Stough said. "But it can show that Christians can stand together and bring comfort to each other, the kind of comfort that knows no barriers of race or denomination."

Third round of NCC grantmaking

In its third round of grantmaking, the NCC's Burned Churches Fund grants committee voted \$365,000 for five African-American churches, bringing the total amount awarded by the fund to \$1.7 million for 21 churches. One of the grants, a \$50,000 award to True Light Missionary Baptist Church in Ruleville, Mississippi, matched a \$50,000 bank loan guaranteed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), signaling the beginning of an official partnership between the NCC's Burned Churches Fund

and the HUD guaranteed loan program. Authorized by President Bill Clinton as part of the Church Arson Prevention Act, the HUD program will guarantee \$10 million in loans to help rebuild places of worship damaged or destroyed by arson.

The NCC effort has come under criticism in articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New Yorker* magazine which accuse the church group of misleading donors by suggesting that all money was for rebuilding and masking its intent to devote 15% of donations to anti-racism programs. Critics also claim that the NCC has exaggerated the extent of racial motivations behind the arson.

At a recent press conference, NCC general secretary Joan Brown Campbell said that the NCC "made it clear from the beginning that the money raised was going to be used for both purposes." She noted that donors always have the option of designating the use of their gifts.

Campbell denied that the NCC has claimed that every black church burning has had racial overtones, but she pointed out "a clear pattern of racist motivation that is not true of attacks on white churches." The NCC also notes that several of the people convicted for arson attacks "have testified about their own racist motivation and their affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Faction and other such groups."

--Jack Donovan is communications assistant in the Episcopal Church's office of News and Information.

96-1572

Press alert

Executive Council to meet in Toronto in joint session with Canadian council

(ENS) The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church will meet in a joint session with the Council of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada at the International Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Toronto, November 7-12.

The council agenda will include consideration of the site for General Convention in 2000, a report on the Episcopal-Lutheran Concordat of Agreement, and discussion of a report from the Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church.

Council committees will meet during the day and evening on Thursday, November 7. An opening reception and dinner for the two councils will be held at 5 p.m.

The plenary session will begin at 9 a.m., Friday, November 8, with an opening address by Primate Michael G. Peers of the Church of Canada. Council members will depart for a tour of ministries in Toronto at 3:30 p.m.

The planning and evaluation committee report on potential General Convention sites will be heard during the morning session on Saturday, November 9. Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning and House of Deputies President Pamela Chinnis will address the council at 2 p.m., followed by reports on the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lambeth Conference. The council will continue to meet in plenary session starting at 11 a.m., Sunday. The meeting concludes with closing remarks from Browning at noon on Tuesday, November 12.

A press conversation with Browning and Chinnis will be scheduled following the meeting's adjournment, November 12. For press accreditation, please contact the Office of News and Information at 212-922-5384.



reviews and resources

96-1573

Resources for PBS Genesis program available

(ENS) *Talking about Genesis*, a study companion for the Bill Moyer's PBS series *Genesis* is available from Bantam Doubleday Dell (\$4.95 each) and can also be ordered from the Episcopal Book/Resource Center, (800) 334-7626 X5107. Other books that are available for Genesis study groups are:

- *Genesis: A Living Conversation*, Bill Moyers' companion volume to the series. \$29.95 Bantam Doubleday Dell
- *In the Beginning: A New Interpretation of Genesis* by Karen Armstrong \$20.00, Knopf
- *Wrestling With Angels: What the first family of Genesis Teaches Us About Our Spiritual Identity, Sexuality, and Personal Relationships*, by Naomi Rosenblatt and Joshua Horwitz. \$22.95, Delacorte
- *Genesis: A New Translation of the Classic Biblical Stories* by Stephen Mitchell. \$20.00, HarperCollins
- *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* by Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg \$15.95, Image

Friendship Press materials available through EPS

(ENS) All Friendship Press resources, including the China and Hong Kong materials listed in the August 22, 1996 issue of ENS, are available through Episcopal Parish Services (EPS) in Philadelphia, (800) 903-5544. Brochures highlighting this year's Friendship Press resources, as well as full catalogs of all offerings from Friendship Press, are available through EPS.

Corrections:

The report on the spanish hymnal in the August 22, 1996 Episcopal News Service incorrectly gave the hymnal name as *Himnario en Español da Iglesia Episcopal*. The actual title will be *El Himnario*.

Photographs available with this issue of ENS are:

1. Presiding Bishop joins in support of anti-discrimination bill (96-1563)
2. Hurricane Fran spreads destruction through North Carolina (96-1567)
3. Conference on international debt addresses human cost of finances (96-1569)
4. Human need a focus of conference on international debt crisis (96-1569)

Tentative mailing dates for future ENS releases are October 17 and November 7.

The Episcopal News Service is available electronically. QUEST users can join the "Episcopal News Service" meeting to receive full versions of all stories or join "ENS Digest" to receive the digest versions of our news stories. Web users can visit the official Episcopal Church website at www.ecusa.anglican.org.



reviews and resources

Photographs available with this issue of *ELPS*

1. Reading Bishop's report on report of investigation (198-1500)
2. Hurricane Pam reports dated 1987 (198-1500)
3. Conference on international data addresses human and all (198-1500)
4. Human and a focus of conference on international data (198-1500)

96-0571

Tentative mailing dates for future *ELPS* issues: 1987-1988

(SNTS) *Talking about Church: a study in the history of the Church* (198-1500)

will now appear in the new issue of *ELPS* (198-1500)

The Episcopal News Service is available in English (198-1500)

"Episcopal News Service" mailing to receive all editions of all editions (198-1500)

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(SNTS) All Friendship Press materials, including the Church and Hong Kong materials, issued in the August 22, 1986 issue of *ELPS*, are available through Episcopal Parish Services (EPS) in Philadelphia, (610) 427-1244. Bookend highlighting this year's Friendship Press resources, as well as the contents of all editions of *ELPS*, are available through EPS.

Corrections:

The report on the special report in the August 22, 1986 Episcopal News Service incorrectly gave the internal name as *Episcopal News Service*. The actual title will be *El Hierarchy*.